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SUBJECT: ANOTHER DISAPPOINTMENT FOR GLOBAL FUND ACTIVITIES
IN MAURITANIA

REF: NOUAKCHOTT 00000577

- ¶1. (SBU) Summary. Following the announcement of Mauritania's suspension from the Global Fund for HIV/AIDS grants, a recent internal United Nations Development Program audit of the Mauritanian Global Fund grants for tuberculosis and malaria indicates that these funds have also been improperly dispersed. The Global Fund has immediately suspended Mauritania from the Global Fund malaria and tuberculosis programs and commenced an internal audit of these funds. Mauritania is now in suspended status for all three of the Global Fund grant programs.
- ¶2. (SBU) In September 2009, Mauritania was suspended from the Global Fund for HIV/AIDS due to evidence of financial mismanagement by the Executive Secretariat of Mauritania's National AIDS Committee (REFTEL A). Following this announcement, the Mauritanian office of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the primary recipient of Global Fund grants for malaria and tuberculosis in Mauritania commenced their own internal audit of Global Fund expenses. The UNDP audit uncovered many severe financial irregularities concerning Global Fund disbursements in Mauritania.
- ¶3. (SBU) Effective immediately, the two remaining Global Fund grant programs in Mauritania (tuberculosis and malaria) have been suspended by the Global Fund Board of Directors until a complete Global Fund audit can be completed. The financial irregularities cover a five-year span of funding and indicate that many of the subcontractors of UNDP falsified expenditure documentation. This is the first time that a single country has had all three Global Fund programs (HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria) suspended simultaneously.
- ¶4. (SBU) There has been no estimate of lost funds, but the Global Fund's Office of the Inspector General is in the process of opening a complete investigation and the UNDP has ceased all current and future cash disbursements for tuberculosis and malaria grants. Provisions are in place to allow for the continuation of life-saving medications and treatments during the investigation.
- ¶5. (SBU) This announcement has not yet been made public, but is certain to cause embarrassment and challenges for the Mauritanian government, NGOs and the local population alike. The Global Fund grants for the fight against HIV/AIDS in Mauritania were mostly in place to prevent Mauritania's relatively manageable HIV/AIDS problem from growing. However,

tuberculosis and malaria are serious threats to current public health in Mauritania. The grants currently suspended for tuberculosis and malaria provided significant funding for public health and prevention campaigns. The grant suspension will be immediately felt by those NGOs and governmental offices working in this domain. As a respected international organization, it is particularly worrisome that the UNDP grants have been tainted by these serious charges of financial irregularity.

¶6. (SBU) It should be noted that the GIRM had a swift and thorough reaction to the corruption charges levied against the Executive Secretariat of Mauritania's National AIDS Committee. While the newest charges span a five-year period and multiple administrations, it will be interesting to watch the GIRM's response. The newest charges have been uncovered just weeks after the GIRM announced its new, and quite ambitious plan outlining a national strategy to combat corruption in Mauritania. The GIRM's level of cooperation into the investigation of these charges may provide an indication of the government's determination, and more importantly, its ability to fight corruption.

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